Quality of Living global city rankings — Mercer survey

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- European cities dominate annual worldwide quality of living rankings
- Zurich scores highest for overall quality of living; Baghdad, the lowest
- Luxembourg ranks highest for personal safety; Baghdad, the lowest

European cities dominate the worldwide rankings of locations with the best quality of living, according to Mercer's 2008 Quality of Living survey. **Zurich retains its 2007 title as the highest ranked city, followed jointly by Vienna (2), Geneva (2), then Vancouver (4) and Auckland (5).**

In the **UK, London ranks 38**, while Birmingham and Glasgow are jointly 56. The **highest entry for the United States is Honolulu**, appearing at number 28. The cities with the **lowest quality of living ranking** are Ndjamena (211), Khartoum (212), Brazzaville (213) and Bangui (214). **Baghdad, ranking 215, retains its position at the bottom of the table.**

The rankings are based on a point scoring index, which sees Zurich scoring 108, while Baghdad scores 13.5. **Cities are compared to New York as the base city**, with an index score of 100. The **quality of living survey covers 215 cities** and is conducted to help governments and major companies place employees on international assignments.

The survey also identifies those cities with the **highest personal safety ranking** based on internal stability, crime, effectiveness of law enforcement and relationships with other countries. **Luxembourg is top, followed by Bern, Geneva, Helsinki and Zurich**, all equally placed at number 2. **Chicago, Houston and San Francisco are amongst the safest cities in the US**, all ranking at 53. Baghdad (215) is the world's least safe city along with Kinshasa (214), Karachi (213), Nairobi (212) and Bangui

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(211). Luxembourg scores 131.4 on the index while Baghdad scores 3.8.

According to Slagin Parakatil, senior researcher at Mercer, "Businesses face constant challenges in identifying new markets, expanding operations and acquiring and strategically deploying resources. Establishing suitable allowances linked to local costs and quality of living is essential in encouraging expatriate employees with transferable skills to accept international assignments."

He added: "Personal and family safety is of paramount importance when employees consider opportunities overseas. Cities that are, or are perceived as, unsafe may experience difficulties in attracting the best people and skills."

Americas

Canadian cities dominate the rankings in the Americas. Vancouver (4) has the best quality of living followed by Toronto (15), Ottawa (19) and Montreal (22). In the US, after Honolulu (28) comes San Francisco (29), Boston (37) and Chicago (44). Washington, DC, ranks 44, above New York (49).

In Central and South America, San Juan in Puerto Rico retains the highest ranking at 72, followed by Montevideo at 76. Port au Prince in Haiti ranks lowest in the region at 202. In terms of the index, Vancouver scores 107.6 compared to Port au Prince's 39.8.

In terms of **personal safety, Canadian cities again perform best** with Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and Vancouver all ranked jointly at 22. In the US, Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Lexington, San Francisco and Winston-Salem all share rank 53. Elsewhere in the region, Santo Domingo has the highest ranking at 92 followed by Panama City (96) and Monterrey (99). Bogota (207) in Colombia has the lowest levels of personal safety. The Canadian cities score 115.8 compared to Bogota's 30.4.

Mr Parakatil said, "Personal safety within Canadian cities ranks among the highest in the region. This is due to a relatively low crime rate and a stable political environment. In contrast, many of the Latin American cities such as Caracas, Bogotá or Port au Prince continue to be undermined by crime and political and economic turmoil. Traffic congestion and pollution have also had an impact."

Europe

Switzerland and Germany dominate the European cities with the best quality of living, each having

three cities represented in the top 10. Bern, in Switzerland, ranks 9 following behind Zurich and Geneva. Dusseldorf (6), Munich and Frankfurt (both at 7) represent Germany. Outside the top 10 are Copenhagen (11), Amsterdam (13), Brussels (14), Berlin (16) and Luxembourg (17). Dublin, ranking 25, is followed by Paris (32), Barcelona (42) and Madrid (43). Lisbon is number 44 and is followed by Rome, 55, up from 61 in 2007. Prague (71) is the highest-ranking eastern European city followed by Budapest (74), Vilnius (78), Ljubljana (82) and Warsaw (85). The lowest ranking European city is Minsk (183) in Belarus. Minsk scores 49.4 on the index compared with Zurich's 108. Milan (41), Lisbon (44), Vilnius (78) and Riga (89) have also become more attractive destinations, rising markedly in the rankings since 2007.

The rankings of Bern, Geneva and Zurich, all at 2, confirm Switzerland's position as one of the safest countries in Europe. According to the index, **Luxembourg, the European city with the highest level of personal safety**, scores 131.4. This is in stark contrast with Moscow, the European city scoring the lowest at 37.7 (196). In the UK, Glasgow (43) and Birmingham (53) rank safer than London (69).

Mr Parakatil commented, "Europe dominates the list in terms of infrastructure, health and political stability. Large discrepancies continue to exist within this region. Living standards in Eastern European cities have been catching up with Western European cities."

Middle East and Africa

Cape Town (80) in South Africa and Port Louis in Mauritius are the region's cities with the best quality of living followed by Dubai (83) and Abu Dhabi (87). In contrast, Johannesburg slips from 90 in 2007 to 94 in 2008 and Harare in Zimbabwe slips from 168 in 2007 to 174. Out of the 25 lowest ranking cities, 19 are from Africa including Lagos (198), Port Harcourt (207) and Bangui (214). Two are from the Middle East including Sanaa (207) and Baghdad (215) – the city with the world's lowest quality of living and lowest levels of personal safety. Cape Town scores 87.9 compared to Baghdad's 13.5.

For personal safety, apart from Baghdad, Kinshasa is the worst location, ranked 214, and Nairobi (212). Lagos and Port Harcourt rank equally at 209. Jerusalem and Beirut both rank 199 and Harare, 184. Abu Dhabi (33) is the region's best city for personal safety, followed by Dubai (47), Port Louis (60). Lusaka and Manama rank equally at (118). According to the personal safety index, Abu Dhabi scores 112 against Baghdad's 3.8.

According to Mr Parakatil, "Several regions of the Middle East have benefited enormously from government investment in infrastructure, health and sanitation and are rising up the rankings. However, personal safety and political tensions remain stumbling blocks and account for the low ranking of many of the region's cities. Multinationals often compensate for this by increasing compensation levels and other benefits for their employees."

Asia Pacific

Auckland (5) is the city in Asia Pacific with the best quality of living, followed by Sydney (10) and Wellington (12). Elsewhere in Asia, Singapore (32) ranks two places higher than in 2007, slightly higher than Japanese cities such as Tokyo (35). Hong Kong and Beijing retain their 2007 rankings, respectively 70 and 116 in 2008. Bangalore (140) is India's most highly ranked city followed closely by Mumbai (142). Both have seen a marked improvement in their rankings since 2007. Elsewhere in Asia, Kuala Lumpur ranks 75, followed by Taipei (84), Seoul (86), Bangkok (109) and Jakarta (146). According to the index, Auckland, the city with the best quality of living in Asia Pacific, scores 107.3 while Dhaka, the city with the region's worst quality of living, scores 38.9.

For personal safety, Pakistan is one of the lowest-scoring destinations with Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore ranked 213, 203 and 192 respectively. Colombo in Sri Lanka appears at 204 while Dhaka (201), Jakarta (189) and Manila (178) are amongst the region's cities scoring lowest on personal safety. **Singapore is the region's best location for personal safety**, scoring 120.2 compared to Karachi's 25.3.

"Increased political stability and the growth of China and India have led to a broad improvement in the quality of living for expatriates in some of the major cities," commented Mr Parakatil." However, border conflicts and internal issues, combined with high levels of crime, make many other countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Indonesia less appealing relocation destinations."

Notes to Editors:

The following **list of rankings** is provided to journalists for reference, and should not be published in full. The top 10 and bottom 10 cities in either list may be reproduced in a table.

For a full copy of the city rankings please **contact the press office.**

Data was largely collected between September and November 2007 and is regularly updated to take account of changing circumstances. In particular, the assessments will be revised in the case of any new developments. The Mercer database contains more than 350 cities, however only 215 cities have been considered for the quality of living 2008 ranking in order to compare from one year to the next.

The worldwide rankings are produced from the most recent Worldwide Quality of Living survey, conducted by Mercer. **Individual reports are produced for each city surveyed, but please note that there is no overall summary report available.** The cost of comparative quality of living indexes between a base city and a host city is 300 Euro (multiple city comparisons are available).

Further information and copies of the reports are available from Mercer Client Services, on +41 22 869 3000. Alternatively, please visit our **dedicated website www.mercer.com/qualityofliving**.

Mercer's study is based on detailed assessments and evaluations of 39 key quality of living determinants, grouped in the following categories:

- **Political and social environment** (political stability, crime, law enforcement, etc)
- **Economic environment** (currency exchange regulations, banking services, etc)
- **Socio-cultural environment** (censorship, limitations on personal freedom, etc)
- **Health and sanitation** (medical supplies and services, infectious diseases, sewage, waste disposal, air pollution, etc)
- **Schools and education** (standard and availability of international schools, etc)
- **Public services and transportation** (electricity, water, public transport, traffic congestion, etc)
- **Recreation** (restaurants, theatres, cinemas, sports and leisure, etc)
- **Consumer goods** (availability of food/daily consumption items, cars, etc)
- **Housing** (housing, household appliances, furniture, maintenance services, etc)
- **Natural environment** (climate, record of natural disasters)

Top 50 cities: Quality of living

Base City: New York, US (=100)

Rank 2008	Rank 2007	City	Country	Index 2008	Index 2007
1	1	Zurich	Switzerland	108	108.1
2	3	Vienna	Austria	107.9	107.7
2	2	Geneva	Switzerland	107.9	108.0
4	3	Vancouver	Canada	107.6	107.7
5	5	Auckland	New Zealand	107.3	107.3
6	5	Dusseldorf	Germany	107.2	107.3
7	8	Munich	Germany	107	106.9
7	7	Frankfurt	Germany	107	107.1
9	9	Bern	Switzerland	106.5	106.5
10	9	Sydney	Australia	106.3	106.5
11	11	Copenhagen	Denmark	106.2	106.2
12	12	Wellington	New Zealand	105.8	105.8
13	13	Amsterdam	The Netherlands	105.7	105.7
14	14	Brussels	Belgium	105.4	105.6
15	15	Toronto	Canada	105.3	105.4
16	16	Berlin	Germany	105	105.2
17	17	Melbourne	Australia	104.8	105.0
17	18	Luxembourg	Luxembourg	104.8	104.8
19	18	Ottawa	Canada	104.7	104.8
20	20	Stockholm	Sweden	104.5	104.7
21	21	Perth	Australia	104.3	104.5
22	22	Montreal	Canada	104.2	104.3
23	23	Nurnberg	Germany	104.1	104.2
24	26	Oslo	Norway	103.7	103.5
25	27	Dublin	Ireland	103.5	103.3
25	24	Calgary	Canada	103.5	103.6
27	24	Hamburg	Germany	103.4	103.6
28	27	Honolulu, HI	United States	103.1	103.3
29	29	San Francisco, CA	United States	103	103.2
29	30	Helsinki	Finland	103	103.1
29	30	Adelaide	Australia	103	103.1

32	34	Singapore	Singapore	102.9	102.5
32	33	Paris	France	102.9	102.7
34	32	Brisbane	Australia	102.4	102.8
35	35	Tokyo	Japan	102.2	102.3
36	36	Lyon	France	101.9	101.9
37	36	Boston, MA	United States	101.8	101.9
38	38	Yokohama	Japan	101.6	101.7
38	39	London	United Kingdom	101.6	101.2
40	40	Kobe	Japan	100.9	101.0
41	49	Milan	Italy	100.8	99.9
42	41	Barcelona	Spain	100.6	100.6
43	42	Madrid	Spain	100.5	100.5
44	44	Washington, DC	United States	100.3	100.4
44	42	Osaka	Japan	100.3	100.5
44	47	Lisbon	Portugal	100.3	100.1
44	44	Chicago, IL	United States	100.3	100.4
48	46	Portland, OR	United States	100.2	100.3
49	48	New York City, NY	United States	100	100.0
50	49	Seattle, WA	United States	99.8	99.9

Top 50 cities: Personal safety

Base City: New York, US (=100)

Rank 2008	City	Country	Index 2008*
1	Luxembourg	Luxembourg	131.4
2	Bern	Switzerland	126.3
2	Geneva	Switzerland	126.3
2	Helsinki	Finland	126.3
2	Zurich	Switzerland	126.3

6	Vienna	Austria	121.1
7	Oslo	Norway	120.8
7	Stockholm	Sweden	120.8
9	Singapore	Singapore	120.2
10	Auckland	New Zealand	119.4
10	Wellington	New Zealand	119.4
12	Copenhagen	Denmark	117.2
12	Dusseldorf	Germany	117.2
12	Frankfurt	Germany	117.2
12	Munich	Germany	117.2
12	Nurnberg	Germany	117.2
17	Dublin	Ireland	117
18	Katsuyama	Japan	116.6
18	Omuta	Japan	116.6
18	Tsukuba	Japan	116.6
18	Yokkaichi	Japan	116.6
22	Amsterdam	Netherlands	115.8
22	Calgary	Canada	115.8
22	Montreal	Canada	115.8
22	Ottawa	Canada	115.8
22	Toronto	Canada	115.8
22	Vancouver	Canada	115.8
28	Brussels	Belgium	114.3

29	Melbourne	Australia	113.2
29	Perth	Australia	113.2
29	Sydney	Australia	113.2
32	Papeete	French Polynesia	112.8
33	Abu Dhabi	United Arab Emirates	112
34	Ljubljana	Slovenia	111.7
35	Kobe	Japan	111.5
35	Nagoya	Japan	111.5
35	Osaka	Japan	111.5
35	Tokyo	Japan	111.5
35	Yokohama	Japan	111.5
40	Berlin	Germany	111.4
41	Hamburg	Germany	110.1
41	Leipzig	Germany	110.1
43	Glasgow	United Kingdom	109.9
43	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	109.9
45	Lisbon	Portugal	108.7
45	Prague	Czech Republic	108.7
47	Dubai	United Arab Emirates	108.3
48	Bratislava	Slovakia	108
49	Adelaide	Australia	107.6
49	Brisbane	Australia	107.6

* Personal Safety Ranking 2008 includes the following criteria: Relationship with other countries; Internal Stability; Crime & Law Enforcement

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